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ABSTRACT

This digest is drawn from "The Role of the Community College in Teacher Education" (New Directions for Community Colleges, Spring 2003). It examines trends in teacher education in the community colleges, including building partnerships and articulation agreements with baccalaureate-granting institutions, designing new associate degree and community college baccalaureate degree programs, and gaining accreditation. By 2010, the United States will need between 2 and 2.5 million more elementary and secondary school teachers to enter the classroom and assume the challenges of public schools. While four-year colleges and universities continue to offer comprehensive teacher preparation programs, community colleges have expanded their programs in the field of teacher education in recent years in order to provide additional options for teacher training. Building partnerships with four-year institutions is central to the community college effort in teacher education. State-level policy coordination is another key element in the process. Some states have funded innovative teacher education programs to encourage collaboration between public community colleges and state universities, as well as, in some cases, K-12 school districts. Community colleges have also begun to experiment with degree programs, although this approach concerns some at the state level, who suggest that the mission of the community college can infringe on the mission of the four-year institution in this case. (Contains 10 references.) (NB)

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Digest

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The Status of Teacher Education in Community Colleges

By Nathan R. Durdella

The United States is in the midst of a teacher shortage. By 2010, the United States will need between 2 and 2.5 million more elementary and secondary school teachers to enter the classroom and assume the challenges in public schools (Townsend and Ignash, 2003). While 4-year colleges and universities continue to offer comprehensive teacher preparation programs, community colleges have expanded their programs in the field of teacher education in recent years to provide additional options for teacher training. In addition to offering the first two years of requirements for a baccalaureate degree, community colleges have added coordinated programs for transfer, added new certificate and associate degree programs, and augmented support services, all of which have increased student access to and completion of teacher preparation programs.

This digest, drawn from "The Role of the Community College in Teacher Education" (New Directions for Community Colleges, Spring 2003), examines trends in teacher education in the community colleges, including building partnerships and articulation agreements with baccalaureate-granting institutions, designing new associate degree and community college baccalaureate degree programs, and gaining accreditation.

Building Partnerships and Articulation Agreements

Building partnerships with 4-year colleges and universities has become central to community colleges' efforts in teacher education. In fulfilling one of their missions as the first two years of a baccalaureate degree program, community colleges have worked to close the gaps in transfer curriculum for teacher education. Townsend and Ignash (2003) document how a growing number of community colleges offer more options to 4-year college and university teacher education programs because of their location, accessibility, affordability, and open admissions policy. They report that officials in a number of states seem to understand these advantages and are coordinating policies to encourage articulation among community colleges and 4-year colleges and universities to which community college students transfer.

State-Level Policy Coordination

State-level policy coordination is essential for teacher education in community colleges to develop as part of seamless baccalaureate programs. Coulter and Crowe (2003) contend that state officials, along with administrators from local schools, community colleges, and universities, can coordinate teacher preparation programs to ensure that K-12 and higher education sectors train teachers collaboratively. They indicate that state education agency policies have addressed a wide range of activities related to teacher education programs, including planning and coordination, data reporting, funding, mission designation, program approval and management, and system alignment. In Missouri, for instance, a statewide articulation committee has been charged with approving community college teacher education programs to facilitate transfer to state universities (Lindstrom and Rasch, 2003). In Arizona, leaders at the Maricopa Community Colleges initiated programs for leaders of local high schools, community colleges, and 4-year colleges and universities around the state that resulted in a transfer model for preservice teachers along with postbaccalaureate certification and in-service professional development for credentialed teachers (Gaskin, Helfgot, Parsons, and Solley, 2003).

State Funding and Partnerships

Some states have funded innovative teacher education programs to encourage collaboration between public community colleges and state universities and in some cases between K-12 school districts, community colleges, and state universities. In California, state officials developed two funding programs, the Teacher and Reading Development Partnerships Program (TRDP) and the Raising Expectations, Achievement, and Development in Schools (READ) program (Hagedorn, Newman, and Duffy, 2003). TRDP addressed K-6 reading scores and teacher shortages by connecting college students with elementary school students for tutoring in reading. Similarly, READ promotes partnerships between community colleges and California State University campuses in teacher education. Community colleges that have not been funded through statewide programs have teamed with local public school districts to expand teacher preparation programs. Hagedorn, Newman, and Duffy (2003) report that some partnerships have targeted instructional assistants in local school districts. For example, they describe how Los Angeles Trade Technical College partnered with the Los Angeles Unified School District to bring classes, student services, and staff to the work sites of the more than 15,000 instructional assistants in the district.

Designing New Degree Programs

In responding to the need for more teachers, community colleges have begun to experiment with degree programs

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that provide students with new options. Coulter and Crowe (2003) note that there are real concerns at the state level concerning the possibility of "mission creep," where the mission of one institution potentially infringes upon another's (p.94). The state's role is to ensure that the statewide response to the demand for more teachers takes such factors as statewide resources and institutional mission into consideration.

Associate of Arts in Teaching

Some community colleges have designed unique associate degree programs in education for students intending to transfer. McDonough (2003) describes how Maryland's community colleges have expanded their missions by adding a new degree to their community college curriculum: the Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT). She reports that Maryland state officials are building professional development schools for teachers. Maryland's AAT degree is fully articulated and identifies learning outcomes, in contrast to specific course numbers and content, for the first sixty hours of instruction in teacher education.

Bachelor of Arts in Education

Although state mandates have generally prohibited community colleges from granting baccalaureate degrees, some community colleges have begun offering a baccalaureate degree in teacher education. In 2001, Florida state officials approved baccalaureate teacher education programs at St. Petersburg College. Furlong (2003) reports this community college delivers five-subject area programs leading to the baccalaureate. In developing these programs, Furlong also reports that St. Petersburg College officials addressed issues of securing full-time faculty and administrators for the new programs, developing curriculum, seeking regional accreditation, and determining program delivery areas. Furlong also describes how St. Petersburg College staff have dealt with student travel concerns in a heavily urban area, found appropriate facilities, trained financial aid and other student services support staff about the new programs, and marketed the programs.

Alternative Teacher Certification

In addition to degree programs, community colleges have expanded teacher certification programs. In Texas, community college officials streamlined the teacher certificate structure by reducing the number of certificates offered and by setting program requirements at the local community college level. May, Katsinas, and Moore (2003) describe how alternative teacher certification programs allow students holding baccalaureate and/or more advanced degrees to enter the teaching profession without having to return to college and major in education. These changes provide flexibility to students who want to change careers and enter the field of teaching.

Gaining Accreditation

Like 4-year colleges and universities, community colleges must gain accreditation to offer course credit and award degrees. For community college teacher education programs, this means seeking accreditation from at least one of the two national accrediting associations: the National Council of Accreditation for Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC). Imig and Harrill-McClellan (2003) report that gaining accreditation legitimizes academic programs while increasing program quality and prestige. They suggest two models that community colleges could follow to obtain accreditation. First, they advance that community colleges could seek accreditation by adapting the accreditation standards of 4-year colleges and universities to meet the specific requirements of their teacher education programs. Alternatively, they describe an "umbrella" accreditation model that would allow community colleges to be recognized, but not fully accredited, for their formal articulation agreements with universities (p. 86).

Conclusion

In confronting a national teacher shortage, community colleges have increased their commitment to and involvement in teacher education. Today, many community colleges offer comprehensive programs and services for training teachers. From university partnerships and articulation agreements to new programs, community colleges have contributed to the way teachers are educated, states respond to public education, and public schools educate their students.

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